
**State Government Operations &
Accountability Committee**

SB 5565

Brief Description: Informing out-of-state, overseas, and service voters of rights and procedures.

Sponsors: Senators Schmidt, Kastama, Weinstein, Roach, Keiser, Sheldon, Shin, Rockefeller, Oke and Kohl-Welles.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Specifies information required on the outer return envelopes for out-of-state, overseas, and service voters.

Hearing Date: 3/18/05

Staff: Marsha Reilly (786-7135).

Background:

When mailing absentee ballots, the county auditor includes a security envelope in which the ballot is sealed, and a larger return envelope in which the security envelope is placed. Instructions are included on how to mark the ballot and return it to the county auditor.

The larger return envelope contains a declaration that must be signed by the absentee voter attesting to his or her qualifications to vote and that he or she has not voted in any other jurisdiction, and a summary of the penalties for violating these provisions. The return envelope also contains a space for the voter to indicate the date the ballot was voted and to sign the oath.

The Secretary of State is required to produce and furnish envelopes and instructions to the county auditors for out-of-state, overseas and service voters. For these voters, the signed declaration on the return envelope may constitute the equivalent of a voter registration for the election in which the ballot is issued. Instructions for these ballots must include where to return the ballot, to attach sufficient first class postage, and to mail the ballot no later than the day of the election for which it was issued.

Summary of Bill:

For out-of-state, overseas and service voters, the outer return envelopes, at a minimum, must include the following information:

- return postage is free;
- the date written on the return envelope by the voter is considered the date of mailing;

- the envelope must be signed by election day;
- the signed declaration is the equivalent of voter registration;
- faxed voted ballots are allowed if the voter agrees to waive secrecy;
- faxed documents must be accompanied by an original signed ballot that must be received by the day of election certification; and
- e-mail provisions that allows for a ballot to be e-mailed to a voter, which the voter may print out, and return by mail.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.